RESTORATION REVIEW

**The New Humanity . . .**

## THE NEW GARMENTS

*Put on the garments that suit God's chosen people.* (Col. 3:12)

The old adage that clothes make the man has at least some truth, truth rooted even in scripture. Our first parents behaved in such a way that it was necessary that God, as the divine tailor, dress them anew. Gen. 3:21 reads: "The Lord God made tunics of skins for Adam and his wife and clothed them." As we turn to the last pages of the Bible we see that the divine tailor is still at work: "They shall walk with me in white, for so they deserve. He who is victorious shall thus be robed all in white." (Rev. 3:4-5)

Throughout history clothes have served for much more than shelter only, for they have had symbolic significance as well. Even the most primitive tribes have clothes the designs and colors of which have more symbolic meaning than practical value. Authority, rank, wealth, position have always been identified and accentuated by the clothes that make the man. Whether the king's robe or the philosopher's mantle, garments are a definite part of the history of culture.

The story Jesus tells about the man without a wedding garment is to the point, even if it be a bit baffling. In explaining the nature of the kingdom of Heaven Jesus tells of this king who prepared a wedding feast for his son, only to have the invited guests refuse to come. He sent servants to the reluctant guests, insisting that they come at once, for everything is ready. Still they do not come, choosing rather to go about their usual business. The king in his fury destroyed his rebellious subjects, and proceeded to invite folk from off the street, such as he could find, good and bad alike. Finally his banquet hall was packed with wedding guests.

But among all these guests was this poor Joe who did not have on a wedding garment. When the angry king asked him about his omission, he had nothing to say, so he was turned out into the dark, bound hand and foot.

It may seem odd to us that Jesus would use such a story to describe the nature of God's kingdom. After all, the poor guy without the proper garment *did* come to the wedding, while others had refused, and is the right garment all that important anyhow? Whatever else may be made of this story, we may conclude that the man's

**Volume 12, No. 9** **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **November 1970**

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In terms of "the seven deadly sins" he was *slothful.* (The other six are pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony and anger.) The kingdom is made up of *concerned* souls, those really sensitive to life's most serious issues. The man's dress indicated that he did not care

much about what was going on. So he was cast out, giving Jesus the occasion to say "Though many are invited, few are chosen." It is like saying "Many profess to be my disciples and wear my name, but few are willing to put on the garments that I layout for them."

In Col. 3:12 Paul tells us of the new garments: "Put on the garments that suit God's chosen people, his own, his beloved: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. It is of course a reference to Christ-likeness, which he says in another way in Gal. 3:27: "Baptized into union with him, you have all put on Christ as a garment." Still again: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

The new nature thus has its new clothing. This is the point of Col. 3. The old clothes of the flesh are to be discarded, and the garments listed make for ugly reading: fornication, indecency, lust, foul cravings, ruthless greed, anger, passion, malice, cursing, filthy talk, lying. And yet these are the very garments worn by many professed disciples. Christians are known by the clothes they wear. If it is the garment of compassion instead of greed, kindness instead of malice, gentleness instead of anger, patience instead of cursing, then the world will take note that he is one who walks with the Lord. He is appropriately dressed for the most August of all feasts.

No garment is more appropriate for the Christian than compassion, for it is being like the Master. Jesus was not caustic and bitter, nor was he rude and judgmental. He has taught us what it means to be merciful. The ever-present multitudes, who harassed him for miracles and food, were objects of his compassion. "When he saw the multitudes, he had compassion for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd," is a tender scene. So is his compassion for the city that crucified him: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that murders the prophets and stones the messengers sent to her! How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings; but you would not let me." (Lk. 13:34)

Equally appropriate dress is kindness. The *Proverbs* tell us that it is kindness that makes a person desirable. Paul assures us that kindness is the Spirit's fruit in us rather than our own goodness. A book called *Youth to the Rescue* is the story of a youth organization in England that is dedicated to kindness. In allowing God to work through them in going out with the express purpose of being helpful to people, the kids involved have had some heart-touching experiences. One project was taking invalid people Christmas shopping; another was taking the aged to the depot to watch the trains. But the story I like best is that of the lad who visited an old lady after a hard day at school. When asked what he did with her, he replied, "She was tired and I was tired, so we both went to sleep." From that time on the two became fast friends! Humility, gentleness, and patience are garments discernible to all. The world is bored with pride and pretense. It is weary of rudeness and intemperance. When these are evident in the lives of Christians, it disillusions the world

with all claims of religious faith. But when they see the garments tailored by God's Spirit, it is a testimony that God is real, that he is present in the lives of his children.

We urge you, dear brother, to examine your wardrobe to see if it is a testimony to your having put on the Lord Jesus Christ.—*the Editor*

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*A Book of Praise . . .*

## READING THE PSALMS—BACKWARDS

On my desk here at Bishop College where I am writing this article is a copy of *The New English Bible,* which I turn to as time allows while I am at work. Nothing strengthens the soul like Bible-reading. Surely something is wrong when a professing Christian does not enjoy his Bible. A disciple that does not love the Bible is to be pitied. It is the one book with which he should linger, not something to be hurried through in some "chapter a day" project. Once the Bible is seen as the book that projects a Person, it can be read with a view of allowing that Person to speak through its pages. Through its pages we see Jesus, the wonderful Person of the scriptures, and if we read it without him in view Bible-reading may be a duty to be performed instead of a joy to be experienced.

The best way for the reading of the scriptures to become exciting is for them to be read with dynamic intent. By that I mean that one should open the Bible with the intention of listening to the Holy Spirit and gleaning some truth that is applicable to *that* day. If one thumbs the pages while he "prays in the Holy Spirit" both for guidance and insight, asking God to reveal something important for the here and now, then Bible-reading becomes a soul-growing discipline.

We should always open the Bible with a sense of awe. "Open my eyes that I may behold great wonders from your word," cried the psalmist. We should read the Word with no less reverence. It is said that Adam Clarke, after many years of arduous work on his commentary, wrote the last lines of his analysis of *Malachi,* the last book he treated, on his knees. The spirit with which he wrote about the scriptures is the spirit with which we should read the scriptures, something all too rare in this era of irreverence.

Oftentimes I take the Bible in hand with no reading plan at all, thumbing here and there, and reading small portions from several places. This seems to be as good a way as any here in my office when I may have only a few minutes. Recently I turned to the book of *Psalms,* to the very end and read the 150th. Then the 149th, making my way through that "Book of Praise" backward. The most effective way to read the *Psalms*, I presume, would be to read the various collections of hymns together, for the book tends to fall into 8

or ten such clusters. But I wasn't interested in order or technique. I simply wanted to read some of the psalms, and I started at the back, just for the heck of it.

Perhaps it was because I had an unusual spiritual appetite at the moment, or perhaps it was the freshness of the rendition of *The New English Bible.* Anyway the message of those last psalms burned into my heart with a new loveliness and with a meaning deeper than ever before.

In my philosophy classes I try to discipline my students to ask themselves three questions when they approach a piece of literature: *What does it say?*, *Is it true?*, and *Is it important?* The questions are intended to guide the student in his search for *the point* and its meaning. I find myself reading the Bible that way, except that I reduce it all to one question since it is God's Word (which is different from all other literature), which is: *What is God saying to me in this passage?*

I conclude that these psalms are encouraging me and showing me how to praise God. Furthermore they are saying that praise and thanksgiving are majors, not minors, in the life of a child of God. And they are saying that praise and thanksgiving should be joyful and meaningful experiences. They also are saying that the ones who composed the hymns were people who walked with God. They provide insights into the meaning of close communion with God. One is impressed that if he prowls around in the *Psalms* sufficiently that some of their spiritual greatness may rub off on him.

There are 13 lines in *Psalms* 150 and 13 times we are told to praise God, with the word appearing in every line. The scholars are probably right when they say this psalm, as well as the others in this cluster, were used as part of the ritual in a temple feast in ancient Israel. When it says, "Praise him with tambourines and dancing," it may well have been followed originally with a burst of the tambourines and gala dancing in the temple courts. And when the crier called out "Praise him with the clash of cymbals," the musicians responded with a clanging that could have been heard all the way to the valley of Hinnom. Can't you just hear them praising God?

As I read through the psalm and noticed how the flute, the trumpet, and stringed instruments are all to be used in praising God, I could not help but wonder how Beethoven would have fared in the Churches of Christ. I thought of the old argument we've always used (it's in the *Old Testament* but not the *New)* about instrumental music, which satisfies me all right; but I could not help but conclude that if God is as displeased with the instrument as we imply that he would have somewhere said so. I have long since concluded that we should declare the instrumental music question a dead issue, certainly insofar as Christian fellowship is concerned.

When that last psalm says "a praise God in his holy place," I don't have to restrict my thinking to that old temple in Jerusalem, which is surely the "holy place" referred to. I apply that to the "holy place" of my heart, where his Spirit dwells. What a blessed reality! It calls for another line in that psalm: "Praise him for his immeasurable greatness."

I fear that praise has been a minor rather than a major in my own life. So these psalms are teaching me. And yet I wonder about the nature of praise, whether it is vocal and verbal or whether it is silent and meditative. Or both. Surely one may cry out praises to God when he is alone in the woods or while driving in his car. How changed our lives might be if we not only got out of bed each morning with a bounce, but also with a cry of praise. "Thank you, dear Lord, that I am *able* to get up and that I have a job to go to!" would be a worthy beginning to anyone's day. One of the psalms speaks of praising God seven times a day, which I take to mean all day long. Should we Christians be any different?

The latter psalms are chock-full of precious nuggets. I placed a checkmark beside a number of them as I read backward. Here are a few.

*His pleasure is in those who fear him, who wait for his true love. (147:11)*

*How good it is to sing psalms to our God! How pleasant to praise him! (147:1)*

*It is he who heals the broken in spirit and binds up their wounds, he who numbers the stars one by one and names them one and all. (147:3-4)*

*As long as I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing psalms to my God all my life long. (146:2)*

*Man is no more than a puff of wind. his days a passing shadow. (144:4)*

*I dwell upon the years long past, upon the memory of all that thou hast done; the wonders of thy creation fill my mind. (143:5)*

The theologians are always telling us what a tyrant and bully the God of the *Old Testament* is, being so different from the God of the *New Testament.* These psalms hardly bear that out. *Psalms* 145 says, "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, forbearing, and constant in his love. The Lord is good to all men, and his tender care rests upon all his creatures." That doesn't sound so tyrannical. Neither does this from *Psalms* 146: "The Lord feeds the hungry and sets the prisoner free. The Lord restores sight to the blind and straightens backs which are bent; the Lord loves the righteous and watches over the stranger; the Lord gives heart to the orphan and widow but turns the course to the wicked to their ruin."

The recurring themes throughout the psalms are *praise, thanksgiving,* and *rejoicing.* And these are not empty exercises, but resources of power. It is not simply good poetry, but the means of transforming our lives. As I read these psalms I had the conviction that most of us have utterly failed in appropriating the spiritual resources that are ours for the asking.

While going over this material I picked up a little volume sent to me by E. L. Keesling of Washington, D.C., with an attending note that read: “Leroy, I predict that you’ll like this book. It will at least stir your thinking,” It is entitled *Prison to Praise* and is the story of a soldier whose boredom in the army led him to conduct that resulted in a prison term, but who eventually became a chaplain who found answers to people’s problems by teaching them to praise God and thank him for their circumstances, He took seriously the injunction “In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:18), and it changed his life and many of those to whom he ministered.

He tells of a couple that had a recalcitrant daughter who was so filled with hatred for her sister that she threw things at her, making life miserable for the entire family. The chaplain urged them to thank God even for this circumstance, and to praise him for what ever purpose he might have in their daughter. They had tried psychology and psychiatry only to fail. Praising God in such a predicament had not occurred to them. Shortly after they were able to thank God for their problem the daughter stood before them in the living room, and once she had their attention she defiantly slammed a potted flower to the floor, scattering dirt and glass over the rug. The parents responded by praising God! The daughter was so impressed that she too praised God and forthwith began to get well.

A wife was terribly worried over her husband being sent to Vietnam. She had no other relatives and she feared the loneliness would destroy her. As the time drew near she was driven to despair. When she went to the chaplain, she was shocked when he advised her to praise God because her husband was being sent to Vietnam. She was awhile accepting this, but the scriptural injunction “In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you,” she resolved to thank God for what was earlier threatening her sanity. The day she turned to thanksgiving the impossible began to happen. Seated beside a man in a waiting room, she glanced at the pictures he was showing to a friend and discovered that one of the pictures was of her mother, whom she had seen only in pictures, being displaced in childhood. The man turned out to be her brother! At the same time her husband, who was a lawyer, was reassigned to a law office and was no longer threatened by Vietnam.

On and on go the chaplain’s stories of people whose lives were changed when they cultivated hearts of praise and thanksgiving. As brother Keesling suggested in his note to me, it is something to think about.

But one need not go beyond the scriptures to find people praising God even amidst adversity. David thanked God that he was afflicted. The apostles thanked God that they could suffer for Christ’s sake. Jesus urges us to rejoice if we are persecuted for his cause. Paul gloried in his infirmities and praised God for his weaknesses. Such a spirit gives strength to weakness and firmness to infirmity.

Those who are learning the discipline of praise and thanksgiving rely upon scriptures that many of us have not yet related to our lives. Such as *Rejoice forevermore!* They also like Neh. 8:10: "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Then there is Heb. 13:15 "Through Jesus, then, let us continually offer up to God the sacri*fice* of praise, that is, the tribute of lips which acknowledge his name," Luke 6:23 speaks of our being glad and dancing with joy.

The chaplain is especially impressed with Eph. 3:20-21 (Phillips): "Now to him who by his power within us is able to do infinitely more than we ever dare to ask or imagine -to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever, amen!"

This passage inspired him to pray for men whose cigarettes were killing them, men whose lives were hampered by a violent temper, and for men who were ruthless with their family. In all such cases God responded in a way that was "infinitely more than we ever dare to ask or imagine," wonderfully enhancing the chaplain's ministry.

God is surely working marvelously in people's lives these days. He will so work in the lives of us all. We must turn from an empty and meaningless religion and be "aglow with the Spirit," praising God and thanking him in all things. If a backward tour through the *Psalms* will encourage this, then happy motoring. After all, backing up is one good way to get started again.—*the Editor*

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## A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

(From one who does not believe in Christmas)

Back in 1952, my first year as an editor, I wrote an article in *Bible Talk* on "How About Christmas?" I am impressed in re-reading it after all these years that there is so much of it with which I still agree. But 18 years have a mellowing effect on any man, certainly an editor, and so I readily concede that I would not write the same way about Christmas now as I did then. And yet I would be hard pressed to refute the position taken in the 1952 editorial. I would only say it is a bit too unyielding, somewhat too strait-laced. Anyway, I have waited almost two decades for my second editorial about Christmas, which should be evidence enough that I have no ax to grind. I am rather eager to see what I come up with after all these years!

I started the 1952 piece by pointing out that Christmas has always been a controversial holiday among Christians. As early as the fourth century Chrysostrom wrote of Christmas: "The day is everywhere a matter for discussion; for some accuse it of being a new feast, while others contend that it is old and original." In tracing its history I found no indication

of any kind of Christmas celebration until well into the fourth century. I took the church fathers, from Polycarp to Tertullian, and found no reference to Christmas.

I concluded that the fourth century Christians borrowed the idea from pagan Rome, patterning a Christ mass after the festival celebrating the rebirth of the sun, called the Saturnalia. This pagan rite was remarkably similar to what we now know as Christmas. The Saturnalia had its special hymns, not too different from our carols, one Christmas carol of old England corresponding exactly to a hymn to Saturn, the sun god. It emphasized giving gifts to children and had its "festival of infants." Saturnalia was for children! It also had its candles and evergreen trees, fitted out with lights and decorations. The time of year was the same, the Saturnalia extending from Dec. 22 to about Jan. 1. I do not know if the pagans sang, "On the twelfth day of Saturnalia my true love came to me," but it did last 12 days and was a time of riotous and sensual behavior. The pope fixed December 25 as Jesus' birthday, relying upon a date in Josephus for the time of Elizabeth's conception (during the feast of Tabernacles which Josephus dates) and from there to Mary's. While that is a risky route to take to Dec. 25, the date is probably as good as any, if indeed we are to celebrate our Lord's birthday.

I observed in the 1952 article that Christmas-minded Christians back in those early centuries were criticized by some church leaders as pagans and sun worshippers, and how historians marvel that Luther did not junk Christmas along with the rest of the pagan practices that he rejected in his reformatory efforts. Christ Mass is after the pagan Saturnalia as much as the candles, holy water, icons, papal homage (including kissing the toe), vestments, etc. are after pagan temple rites.

So my conclusion back in 1952 was completely unambiguous. While I did not propose to settle the question for others relative to trees and cards, exchanging gifts and celebrating the Mass for Christ, I was unequivocal about my own position. "I do not care to practice paganism and thus be a pagan, so I have *nothing* to do with Christmas," I wrote.

I also wrote, by way of explaining that Luther was unable to stop something that had such a sentimental value: "For example, just try to get members of the church of Christ to ignore our pagan Christmas, irrespective of Paul's warning: 'You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I'm afraid I have labored over you in vain: (Gal. 4:10-11)."

I was careful in those days to use the small "c" in referring to the Church of Christ. I am now just as diligent in avoiding it. But I would not apply Gal. 4 in that way now, for I rather think Paul is condemning the observance of holidays *for the sake of justification.* Yet it is true that Christianity has neither holy days nor holy places, a sobering fact to keep in mind as we evaluate Christmas in the life of a Christian.

One point that I did not raise then that I do raise now is whether Christians may not beat the world at its own game and thus "Christianize" what is admitted to be pagan in origin. Rather than condemning the state fair as worldly, invade it in Jesus' name and set up booths for the distribution of gospel literature. And if the pagans have a celebration like the Saturnalia, something with cultural and emotional value, take it into captivity for Christ and use it to his glory. Radio, TV, the newspapers, cinema, the universities, libraries, museums, and all the rest may be pagan and secular. Let us then storm such cultural citadels and claim them for him who is Master of all culture. That too is scriptural: "We take every thought captive and make it obey Christ." (2 Cor. 10:5)

So it could be argued that the Christians who adapted the Saturnalia to a birthday celebration for Jesus, moving from the sun god to the Son of God, did just what Christians should be doing all along. To the pagans of Rome the Christians might have been saying: "Jesus can use your Saturnalia since it is so dear to the people. It shall henceforth be in honor of his birth rather than that of the sun god."

It is, after all, a bit farfetched to accuse modern Christians of worshipping the sun god when they erect an evergreen and place gifts of love under it. Our brethren surely aren't pagan when they send greeting cards or wish people a Merry Christmas. They could reply that they don't give a hang about its origin, but for its meaning to them and their family.

I don't know what I would have said to this back in 1952 had someone made such observations, but I now find them rather persuasive. I am now more concerned with the spirit than the letter, with what lies deep inside a man more than with the paraphernalia of context. Just as I rejoice over what sanity I find in our insane world, I am pleased even with faint responses to the Christ in a world that murdered him. Despite all its commercialism there is something about Christmas that should not pass from our culture. Even though it is as pagan in origin as I described it as being in my 1952 article, a thesis that can hardly be questioned, it can still be adapted to the glory of God by creating a greater awareness of Jesus in a world that has far too few reminders. If Christmas does no more than make people a little more conscious of that hymn of angels about "Peace on earth and good will towards men," it is enough to cause me to spend my time on subjects other than those that tie Christmas to the pagan Saturnalia. I could as well complain about *Sunday* and *June* being names of Roman deities and go off in search of a non-pagan calendar. I have become a realist in my golden years!

Eighteen years have not only made me wiser and mellower but a father as well. Three orphans from different parts of the world have come to live with us, and they wear my name. I am to them a father and they are to me sons and a daughter. Convinced somewhat now that "Saturnalia is for children," Ouida and I always give them a good Christmas, including an evergreen, lights, presents. Not yet convinced that we should lie even for the sake of adaptation, we have not followed the Santa Claus bit. I don't like saints, not even

Saint Claus, who certainly competes with Christ as a man of wonder. But that has made no difference to our kids, for they could not care less who Santa is, so long as he delivers!

So for a long time now I have joined other concerned Christians in viewing Christmas in terms of what it *should* mean to the world. Jesus grows dearer to me as I grow older, and I am eager for others to know him and love him and to draw strength from his grace. If the Christmas message means that Jesus has come into the world to give man wholeness, then let us do all we can to help the message get across. God gave the world a baby. His coming meant health, forgiveness, and peace to aching bodies and distressed minds to those whose lives he touched. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He lives now as well as then, and his touch of love can mean as much to any man today as it did to those in ancient Galilee.

When Christmas comes to my home town of Denton, Texas, now made famous by Miss America as well as *Restoration Review,* with its gala celebrations and homecomings, along with dancing lights of many colors, one may hope that Christ is "at our gates" as with Bethany of yesteryear. The glowing *fires* and songs of love in a thousand homes would suggest that he is at least at the door of those who speak and sing of him.

The sad fact remains that even though he was such a blessing to the world there were cities like Denton and homes like ours that did not welcome him even when he was "at the gates." Perhaps the people of Bethlehem could not be blamed, but it was an omen of things to come when there was no place for him in the inn. Nazareth was his boyhood home, but once he returned after commencing his prophetic mission, his fellow citizens thrust him from the city, threatening to kill him. He probably did more of his work in Capernaum than any other city, but its people treated him only with contempt and indifference, causing him to say of them: "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

One would suppose any city would be pleased to have Jesus at its gates and to welcome him entrance. All cities rejoice over the visit of a king or president. I was in Dallas recently for President Nixon's visit, and it was with difficulty that I even saw him so great were the crowds. No seats were available to hear him in the same area where President Kennedy was to have spoken on that fateful November day, and I was 30 minutes early.

But he who is king over all kings was rejected by the cities of his day. There was Gadara where he cured the man named Legion, who was a demoniac. The people begged him to leave their borders. They did not want any trouble. Then there is Jerusalem, the city for which he wept. There he was scourged, imprisoned, and crucified.

Bethany is different in a way. There was Mary and Martha at least who went out to meet him "at the gates" and welcomed him to town, to their home. It was a passionate plea from a bereaved home that brought Jesus to the gates of Bethany on this occasion. He is no

less concerned for breaking hearts and despondent homes in Denton, Texas today. But at Bethany he waited at the gates. It takes *little* imagination to see Jesus at the outskirts of any of our cities, especially at Christmas time, but the gnawing question remains as to whether he is really wanted in our streets and in our homes. Even at Bethany, where they witnessed the raising of Lazareth from the dead, there were those treacherous ones who hurried to the Pharisees to devise evil against him.

Christmas will soon be here again, and we will be wishing each other the old wish that it might be merry and bright. It could well be just that if Jesus is even so near as at our gates. We may never grasp the full meaning of the Christmas message, but surely it means that Jesus makes an important difference in our lives. Denton is indeed blessed, as is every city, if we have those who will go out to meet the Lord, like Mary and Martha, and welcome him to our city. The full gladness of Christmas will be ours when he is inside our celebrations, inside our rejoicing, inside our hearts, and not just at the gates.

Merry Saturnalia and a Happy New Year!—*the Editor*

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## CALLING AT THE BACK DOOR

My job as teacher at a black college (Bishop College in Dallas) gives me the opportunity to visit informally with Negroes who have distinguished themselves in the field of education. When I have such ones across the table from me in the student union, I encourage them to talk about their youth, their struggle to get an education, and their experiences in white America. When they tell their stories of what it means to be black "down in Mississippi" and of the deprived schools they attended in East Texas, I am made to marvel that they ever made it. I can recall the poverty of my own youth and the desperate struggle to get an education, but these men cause me to realize I had one distinct advantage that was denied them, however poor I was. I was white.

There is one gentleman at Bishop whom I especially enjoy. Having some attraction for philosophy, he drops by my office quite often for a chat, but I am always the one that learns from these brief visits. For some 40 years he served as teacher and principal in the Dallas high schools, and he is now in his "second career" at Bishop, serving as assistant to the president. A highly cultured man, he has the bearing of a diplomat. He could as well pass for our ambassador to Ghana as well as a school principal. He was the first man in Dallas to serve as principal of an integrated school, having a white assistant principal and 19 white teachers under him in a predominantly black school. And that was back when it was still dangerous as well as delicate, and it was in Texas.

I like to hear him talk about those days. He never had any problems stemming from the integration. He made one rule that proved to be preventive, he thinks, and that was that everybody on the staff was to be *Miss*, *Mrs.* or *Mr.* No "first name" informalities. He dropped a little of his philosophy at this point, asserting that informality tends to break down the pursuit of excellence. He's the kind that would appreciate Army dress and discipline. When you get sloppy in your dress and manners, you are not as good a fighter. I'll have to admit that when he addresses me with an August "Good morning, Dr. Garrett" that it inclines me to my better self. Nobody ever says that like he does!

This bit about discipline in education reminds me of a Chinese professor we had at Bishop last year. Born in Peiping [Now Beijing (gt)] and reared in Hong Kong, he was educated in the West, taking his doctorate at Zurich. He was terribly disturbed by the lack of motivation and the lack of interest on the part of so many Bishop students. He told me what he thought would help matters: *put them all through military discipline!* He insisted that the students would learn better if they were trained to stand at attention and click their heels when the professor entered the room, and then wait until he nods in response before taking their seats. The kids' informality frustrated him to no end. That Teutonic stamp was clearly visible in his educational outlook. While I always called him by his first name, which he accepted as appropriate, I could never get him to call me *Leroy,* not once. It was always *Doctor* Garrett, with emphasis on the *tor.* When I was first introduced to him, he bowed emphatically from the waist, with hand on abdomen, as a gesture of respect for a senior professor. He's moved on now, and I fear the year at Bishop made a racist of him!

Before I get back to my "ambassador" friend, I want to tell you about this Chinese professor and his cats, which he took into his apartment out of pity when they appeared at his door. When they had diseases, he took them to a vet; when he was made to get them out of his apartment by the landlord, he paid for their board at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Being a bachelor and having no relatives in this country, they became the objects of his personal concern.

When they made him take his cats away, he came to my office to tell me about it. He closed my door for the sake of privacy, and he was so distraught that I thought maybe he had been fired. He began to relate his loss as if it were a tragic tale, and I found myself not only relieved but almost smiling when he began to talk about the cats. But I soon saw that this was far more important to him than it would have been to me, so I generated a sympathetic attitude in a hurry. He told of how one of the cats would cuddle up to him and purr, and of how sure he was that she would not live very long in a cage. He then cradled his head in his lap and wept like a child. I was of course deeply touched by this scene. *How badly a man needs to love and be loved,* I thought. As he sat there in tears I thought of the humble people of the soil of his native China, a people made sensitive to suffering

through six thousand years of deprivation. *Tears over the predicament of a cat,* I thought, *while most of us Americans can barely show concern for the plight of human kind.*

It was a good lesson for me. I resolved that hour that I would show more tenderness to all that lives, to cultivate a keener *reverence for life,* to use Schweitzer's term.

Well, when my Chinese friend left, he was threatening to take the cat to Hong Kong with him. The other cat had run off in the meantime, but the one he loved so much was still around, boarded out at first but finally slipped back into his apartment. Rather than for him to go to such trouble and to show him that Americans do sometime care for animals, I volunteered to take the cat. She is still around, except that soon after my kindly gesture she multiplied into *five* cats. That shows you what happens when you try to be benevolent!

But back to my diplomatic friend. He stands tall, erect and dignified, and he is a good and humble man, a Christian Scientist. He told me of how he learned while growing up that he was always to go to a white man's *back* door and never the front door. This he did all through the years, even during his professional career as a principal, and in the Negro world a principal is somebody. Even when the white man's house was inferior to his own and the white man himself was less refined, still he went to the back door. Always to the back door!

There was once, however, that he called at a man's back door on school business, when the man of the house met him and said something like: "The idea, sir, you coming to my back door! I will not have this. If you come into my home, it will be by the front door like everyone else."

"I've never forgotten that," he told me, with a twinkle in his eye, "He treated me like a gentleman."

That simple story made my heart ache. "My God, what have we done to our black brothers," I cried out to myself. The cruelties that we've shown can only be matched by the indignities that we have heaped upon ourselves by such behavior.

It grieves me to realize that if this fine man had called at our home back in those days he would have gone to our back door too. And we wouldn't have directed him to the front door! I can distinctly recall their coming to our door, the *back* door, sometimes for food or water. If food, they ate it on the back porch. If water, it was never served in a glass, but in a jar that could easily be boiled or thrown away. And we were probably an average Christian family. But we didn't know better, and I'm thankful that God has brought us to a brighter day. Here we are, black and white together, trying to educate these young people.

When I asked him what would contribute most to a lessening of the existing racial prejudice, he told me a sweet little story about a white minister of his acquaintance, who had a black cook in his family for so long that she was almost one of the family. On occasions when visitors would be sitting at his table and complimenting the food, the minister would praise the virtues of "Miss Jones." Never *Rachel,* which was of course cus-

tomary, to call the black help by their first names. So at the minister's home it was always "Miss Jones did this" and "Miss Jones did that." And the guests were always astounded when the minister would at last introduce the one who had prepared the delicious meal "Friends," he would say, rising to his feet when the cook made her appearance, "1 want you to meet Miss Jones."

Time fails me to tell about my students who work in Dallas stores, but who are denied the raises and promotions that the white students from SMU get. They still have to call at the back door! Or of another professor friend who had trouble housing and feeding his students on a field trip through South Texas into Mexico. Or of the Bishop students in assembly when they sing "We Shall Overcome," and when they chant the lines that make my backbone tingle: "I may be white, I may be black, and *I am black*, but I am SOMEBODY."

And we are less than decent when we allow any SOMEBODY to call at our back door. And that has to apply to all the "back doors" in the area of employment, housing, opportunities, church life, education, and social intercourse.—*the Editor*

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## ABSOLUTELY SURE

*By Chaplin T. F. McNABB*

"Oh, God, I don't understand! How can it be? God, give me an answer!"

I threw myself across my bed at three o'clock in the morning and desperately cried out to God for an answer. Only two months before I had stood by the grave of my wife, the mother of my two small daughters. With the baby in my arms, and the four-year-old standing by my side, I watched the casket being lowered into the grave. It broke my heart.

She was the most dedicated Christian I had ever known. Her Spirit-filled life, her loving devotion to the Lord Jesus, was something that inspired me continually. But her life ended at a comparatively early age.

The children went to stay with their maternal grandparents. I stored my household goods, vacated the new house we had just bought, and moved into the bachelor officers' quarters at the Army post. Suddenly I was left with no children, no family, alone. I plunged myself anew into my work as an Army chaplain.

On this night when I was praying so desperately to God, demanding an answer, something else had happened. At one o'clock in the morning I was called to the home of a sergeant. It was a case of drunkenness, domestic trouble, and fighting. Furniture was smashed; windows were broken; the place showed the tragic results of sin in the home.

The couple had two small children. The whole family seemed well enough. They had health; they had one another; they had all the necessities of life, materially speaking, and yet those parents did not seem to appreciate it.

As I drove back to my quarters that night, I thought of the happy home I had known only two months before. It was a Christian home. We loved our children; we began and ended each day with prayer and Bible reading. Love saturated the atmosphere: love for one another and love for God. But our home had been broken up by death—while the sergeant's home was intact, even though sin reigned in it.

Somehow it just didn't seem to add up, I reasoned. I had given my life to God's work, and here I was alone—no wife, no children, everything stripped from me while those who caroused, fought, and lived in sin had their home and were together!

I cried our to God as I lay across the bed sobbing; and then I opened my Bible and read in the Book of Job, chapter 16. "Surely now God has worn me out; he has made desolate all my company. And he has shriveled me up... He had torn me in his wrath... He has gnashed his teeth at me... God gives me up to the ungodly... I was at ease, and he broke me asunder; he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces."

That is just the way I felt! Job's description fitted me exactly, I decided. Then I realized that Gad was trying to show that He, not Job, not Satan, was sovereign; that He was Lord. Job was voicing his honest feelings. There was no whitewashing, no glossing over, and God must have appreciated that honesty, because in the last chapter of the book He said that Job's friends had not spoken the truth about *Him,* as had His servant Job.

On that memorable night in my quarters, as I cried and waited before the Lord, God revealed Himself to me. He showed me that He was interested in my life. He showed me that He was sovereign, He was almighty, and He had control of my life. I cannot say that He answered all my questions that night, nor solved all my problems, but He revealed His love to me and I resigned my will to His.

No longer did I insist on having an immediate answer as to why tragedies and disappointments come to a Christian. I saw the great wisdom and power of the Lord, and I wanted above all else to adore and serve Him.

There are things that happen to even the most dedicated Christians that we may never understand. But he has promised to go with us through every experience. He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and I can witness that He has kept that promise for me.

I recall a young man in the veterans hospital where I was undergoing hospital clinical training. I spent quite a bit of time with Michael, an ex-sergeant who was paralyzed from the waist down. He had undergone surgery recently. Lines of suffering showed on his face. I sat by his bed and talked to him of God's love and mercy. Finally he turned to me and said, "Chaplain, I am a Christian. But could you tell me something? My friends are not

Christians. They drink and take God's name in vain. But they are up, walking about while I am paralyzed. Why do I have to suffer so? Why?"

I could remember when I would have had a quick answer for Mike. I could have done a lot of explaining. But that day I did not say anything for some time. I clasped his hand, and I could feel him gripping mine. Tears were in my eyes.

Finally I said, "Mike, I have to be honest: I really don't know. I have served the Lord a long time but there are a lot of things for which I don't have the answer."

I went on to say, "But, Mike, the apostle Paul said, 'I know whom I have trusted and I am absolutely sure that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day'."

"Absolutely sure!" Mike repeated.

"*Absolutely sure*, Mike, is what he said. That's been my consolation through the years."

Michael tightened his grip on my hand. "You know, Chaplain, if we believe that—well, finding an answer to all the other problems in life is not so important, is it?

"That's my feeling, Mike," I assured him. "Our trust in Him is the important thing!"

God knows what is best. We must allow Him to do what He wants to do. We may think we know the will of God for our lives, and be anxious to do it, and yet we may be in for a rude awakening. God's ways are higher than our ways.

What He wants is our trust. He wants us to know He is Lord. God has the right to do what He wants to do with my life. Job learned this and he said, "He knows the way that I take: and when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

We won't always know His way in advance. We won't always understand here in this life why He does what He does; but if we trust Him, that is all that is necessary.

Learn to trust God for who He is—almighty, omnipotent, sovereign, yet a loving, understanding God. Do not be afraid to face the facts of life. Be honest with God. He will reveal Himself in due time.

In the past year's assignment as an Army hospital chaplain I have dealt with tragedy, death, suffering, and pain, and there have been many times I have been without an answer. But knowing God's love, I have been able to point the patients to God and to His Son, Jesus Christ, and to say with all my heart:

"I know whom I have trusted and I am absolutely sure that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2 Tim. 1:12, Williams).

—*Chaplain McNabb is with the U.* S. *Army in Germany.*

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## READERS' EXCHANGE

## Freedom and Structure

The following letter from an editor of a leading Disciples publication will be of interest to those who are willing to take a critical look at ourselves in reference to other groups of the Restoration Movement. It is difficult for us to imagine that others, towards whom we have directed all sorts of charges, may be as "scriptural" as ourselves and even freer than ourselves.

> Your comments about my editorial were greatly appreciated. Although I never hesitate to differ with other people in my editorial writing, I do like the overall effect to be helpful and not detrimental. There is no value in a completely negative approach to our problems, so far as I can see.
>
> You have hit upon the real issue, I think. It is a question of whether we can be "free and structured" and also whether others can be "free and unstructured." I really was greatly alarmed, more than I expressed in my editorial, about the lack of freedom that is felt by many ministers in the North American. They are not free to speak against their system if they want to continue to work and move along as their ability warrants. I really do believe our congregations and ministers are free. If one does not believe so, he ought to attend a few general board meetings and read my mail for a week. I think our congregations will do whatever they do on structure and union on the basis of what they want to do, not because they feel they have to do something.
>
> As a church historian, I would have to say that all three groups are on the way toward closer structure. You are where we were at the turn of the century and the North American is where we were in 1917. I am amazed that a hundred congregations would send their money to one single congregation and let it and its elders operate the missionary program. That's a kind of structure Disciples couldn't effect! I read in *Firm Foundation* an invitation from Highland Park (Abilene?) to congregations all over the country to send its elders money to help support 100-plus missionaries serving under that congregation. In line with your last sentence, if that is "being scriptural," then I have no fear that the Lord will accept our United Christian Missionary Society and the North American's Brazil Christian Mission.
>
> This brings my best regards and good wishes for a fine semester—and no campus riots.

When I am reminded of such inconsistencies of ours as vehemently opposing missionary organizations, conventions, and seminaries when we have the same things with different names, it disturbs me only moderately, for inconsistency isn't all that bad. It may

be our only way of growing and getting by with it! What really disturbs me is that we reject as full blood brothers men like the editor who wrote the above. This good man and thousands like him cannot enter our pulpits, speak at our lectureships, or teach in our schools because they are "there" where they have societies and conventions while we are "here" where we clandestinely have the same things, though maybe not as well structured and effective. The Lord may bear with us in the games we play with each other, but it is something else when we carry them so far as to reject those he has claimed as his own. Jesus may care little about the likes of Herald of Truth or the UCMS, but he may well declare a day of reckoning for those of us who use such things in drawing lines of fellowship on each other.

## To Pat and Shirley with Love

We had the pleasure of meeting Pat Boone about a year ago. We feel that he is a wonderful Christian who is truly letting his light shine. Many in the brotherhood would hope that his light may dim because they do not understand him.—*New York*

I feel very sympathetic toward Pat Boone.—*Louisiana* (on leave from 41 years of work as missionary to Africa)

Please rush me a copy of Pat Boone's book, *A New Song.* I can hardly wait. Let us pray that hypocrisy will be wiped out by the Spirit of Christ reigning within us.—*New Mexico*

Pat Boone has shown much strength during the years he has had some unjust criticism. —*Texas*

Please send us a copy of Pat Boone's *A New Song.* We are interested in Pat's experiences because reactions to our minister's testimony to his "baptism in the Spirit" have shown that even people whom we thought were open and reasonable can only withdraw in fear when confronted with an outpouring of God's power. They remind me of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor when he says in effect, "Jesus, we've just about got all of the impractical kinks out of your teachings, so don't mess things up by your Presence."—*Michigan*

Glad you are telling Pat Boone's story so sympathetically. I am more or less with all those folk. God love you.—*Alabama*

Please send us Pat Boone's new book. We have defended Pat several times in these parts, always in the spirit of love. Tell him that there are at least the two of us who are in the fellowship with him that have not met him-since his articles and TV appearances more than ever.—*Virginia*

## 8,000 Vacant Pulpits

An ad appears in our press from one of the schools of preaching to the effect that "There are about 8,000 vacant pulpits among Churches of Christ today." Men are invited to accept the challenge of these empty pulpits, and thus prepare themselves for the task at said school of preaching, one in Louisiana.

While I can hardly accept such a figure as 8,000 for the number of our vacant pulpits, which would mean about one of every four, I suppose that is not the point. If there are but a thousand, the ad would still be appropriate, if indeed it is appropriate at all. It sounds so unlike a people who identify themselves with a Movement that seeks to restore the priesthood of every believer. The idea that one must come from *outside* the congregation, having been trained at a school of preaching, to satisfy the needs of that congregation is hardly scriptural, even if generally practiced.

The scriptures often praise that congregation that provides for its own edification, "able to teach one another." If indeed we have so many vacant pulpits, or even a few for that matter, it would be more appropriate that they be urged to do their own teaching. If so many of our pulpits are unoccupied, the few enrolled in the preaching schools would hardly make much difference anyway. It is a chance for us to prove that we really believe in the ministry of every Christian. While all cannot be teachers or preachers, surely in every congregation there are those who can encourage the others unto good works.

## The White Church of Christ

When I read your article sometime back about your work at Bishop College, I thought what depths of Christian love you have to do such work. You are to be commended. But I find the story about brother Keeble hard to believe. Having been spirited away from Texas at an early age, brother Keeble is little more than an apocryphal legend to me, but I know he existed and did much for the Lord. Could it really be true that in preaching to mixed audiences he offered separate invitations to blacks and whites? How absurd and pathetic. I realize we live in a much more enlightened age and someone has said that hindsight is 20/20, but I find that story hard to believe. I am sure it happened, but I cannot help but shake my head in baffled amazement. We have a long way to go to rectify the wrongs we have done to our Christian brothers whose skins happen to be a little browner than our own. I can only be thankful that the Lord has men like yourself who have made a commitment at great personal sacrifice to help resolve this wrong. I have resolved to shake myself out of my lethargy and take a more positive, active part in helping to destroy these artificial barriers which have separated us not only as brethren but as human beings.—*University of Nebraska, Lincoln*

Floyd Rose, a black brother who ministers to the Ridgewood congregation, 1818 Ridgewood Ave., Toledo, Ohio, traveled extensively with brother Marshall Keeble when but a lad. He is the one who described to me how brother Keeble used a rope to separate the whites from the blacks in his tent meetings. Young Floyd would urge the famed preacher to take down the rope "at least for the invitation," but was always told that he didn't understand.

The purpose of telling this story and others similar to it was not to discredit Marshall Keeble or in anyway to blame him. It was a way of illustrating how we are and always have been a white Church of Christ, just as our nation is white America. Racism is among our sins. Even those who are sure they have no prejudice will innocently declare that "I wouldn't want my daughter to marry one of them." That use of *one of them* is prejudicial and demeaning, however benevolently it is uttered. By the way, I never hear "I wouldn't want my *son* to marry one of them." Could this be because the white man has always assumed access to the black woman, while denying the black man access to the white woman? Did not Lincoln fear that doom would come upon a nation when its fathers sell their own sons on the auction block?

One social worker from "up North" was on a fact gathering tour through the South. In passing the time with the fellows in beer parlors, he would often ask if there were any white men in the area that had themselves some black mistresses. This always brought stories and laughter, tales about the old Joe's in town that had a black gal to sleep with on the side. The visitor would then quietly ask if there were any black men in town that had a white girl.

The response was always electrifying. The laughter and the jokes not only ceased, but the man was summarily challenged for asking such a question, sometimes being physically attacked and at least once having to flee for his life.

The Report to the President on Social Disorders states that most white Americans are racists, that we have built two cultures, one white and one black, and that unless radical changes occur in our thinking and behavior our nation is destined to have racial conflict of serious proportion.

If we suppose that our white, southern, middle-American Church of Christ is any different from what is implied in the stories just related, we only deceive ourselves. And this is the heart of all sin: *self-deception.*

The only answer to all this, if indeed we choose to be Christians, is the one given above by the brother from Nebraska, who is changing his attitude and practices, and who is resolved to take an active role in "destroying these artificial barriers which have separated us not only as brethren but as human beings."

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## BOOK NOTES

Pat Boone's *A New Song* is really taking hold. Our first supply was quickly exhausted with orders still coming in. We will have a fresh supply by the time you write us. 4.95 is apparently not too much for such a dynamic story. We will fill your order the day it arrives. We will be glad to have your response to it, which, with your permission, will be forwarded to Pat and Shirley Boone. The book is already in its second printing. J. D. Bales of Harding College plans to issue a book in answer to *A New Song*, but word from Searcy is that he needs financing to get it out. Pat might well afford to underwrite J. D.'s book, for Pat seems to thrive on opposition. Nothing like being banned in Boston, you know, or Searcy or Nashville or somewhere.

This will be our last mention of *Voices of Concern: Studies in Church Christism* by Robert Meyers. The book is now out of print, the few remaining copies being those in bookstores here and there. I suppose we have had 300 of them, but now we have about a dozen left. You should order at once if you've planned to pick up this volume that will not be reissued. 3.50.

*Hazard of the Die* is a study of the Restoration Movement in general and of Tolbert Fanning in particular. It deserves a place in your Restoration library. 4.95.

You may have read in the public press of how The New English Bible is selling so well, already in the millions. It is even an offering of the Book-of-the-Month Club, and it is being acclaimed as the most significant publication of this century. One outstanding virtue, so often mentioned by reviewers, is its clarity. If you want obscure passages to come alive, then try the NEB. Handsomely bound. 8.95.

Remember Dr. Mudd, who gave medical aid to Lincoln's assassin and who was given a long prison term for doing so? *Suppose the worst man in the world applied to the best surgeon in the world for relief from a condition that would prove fatal unless relieved by surgery. Should the surgeon operate?* With that question Karl Menninger introduces Joseph Fletcher's book *Morals and Medicine.* It discusses such questions as our right to know the truth, fertility control, artificial insemination, sterilization. The new paperback edition is only 2.45.

We recommend a little paperback on *Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism*, which includes writings of Channing, Emerson, and Parker. These men have much to say to the "now" generation, and they are good tonic for any generation. Parker, for instance, insists that there is a greater difference between Jesus and the Christian sects of today than there was between Jesus and a pagan like Plato. Emerson's part is the famous Divinity School

Address, in which he criticizes the clergy before a graduating class of clergymen! Channing's piece shows one what Unitarians originally believed, which was more anti-Trinitarian than Unitarian. These men were contemporaries of Alexander Campbell and one cannot help but compare their views and identify them as common spirits in their rejection of formalism in the pulpit. Only 1.45.

It is time to send us your order for this year's *Restoration Review,* which will be bound under the title of *The New Humanity.* You need send no money. We will bill you when we send the book, the price being only 3.00.

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RESTORATION REVIEW is published monthly (except July and August) at 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas. Leroy Garrett, Editor. Second class permit at Denton, Texas. Subscription rate is $1.00 per annum; 50 cents in clubs of 6 or more.

*Address all mail to:* 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas 76201.*